

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION**

MID-PACIFIC REGION

**SOUTH-CENTRAL CALIFORNIA AREA OFFICE
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**ARVIN EDISON WATER STORAGE DISTRICT/METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT 2009-
2010 WATER EXCHANGE PROGRAM**

**Central Valley Project
Sacramento, California**

FONSI-09-97

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Arvin Edison Water Storage District/Metropolitan Water District 2009-2010 Water Exchange Program

In accordance with the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the South-Central California Area Office of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation,) has determined that an environmental impact statement is not required for the approval of an exchange of Arvin Edison Water Storage District's (AEWSD) Central Valley Project (CVP) water to Metropolitan Water District (MWD) of up to 80,000 acre-feet (af), (40,000 af/year) between June 1, 2009 and May 31, 2010. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA) Number 09-97, *Arvin Edison Water Storage District/Metropolitan Water District 2009-2010 Water Exchange Program*, dated June 2009, and which is hereby incorporated by reference.

AEWSD would allow up to 40,000 af/year of its 2009 Contract Year (March 1 through February 28) and a similar amount in CY 2010 through May 31, 2010 Class 1 or Class 2 Friant Division CVP supplies to be delivered to MWD. The exchanged CVP water will be delivered from Millerton Lake Reservoir at existing diversion points at Friant Dam into the Friant-Kern Canal (FKC). The water would be transported through the FKC to Milepost 151.80, the AEWSD Turnout. No other CVP facilities would be utilized in the delivery of the exchanged water. The water supplies will be exchanged within the AEWSD canal system. The CVP water would then be transported through AEWSD conveyance facilities to a point of introduction into the California Aqueduct at the AEWSD California Aqueduct Turnout/Turnin while AEWSD would take possession of previously banked MWD SWP water.

BACKGROUND

The proposed exchange would assist AEWSD in fulfillment of its obligation under the groundwater banking Program with MWD. MWD has been placing their SWP supplies with AEWSD for storage in AEWSD's groundwater reservoir for many years. AEWSD has historically pumped the stored groundwater out and introduced the actual groundwater into the California Aqueduct (Aqueduct) for return to MWD in years in which MWD has requested. The current proposal would allow AEWSD to send some of their own CVP Friant water to MWD in lieu of AEWSD pumping groundwater. As a consequence, the groundwater that otherwise would have been pumped would be exchanged in its ownership from being MWD's to AEWSD's, consistent with the terms of the Program, thus completing the exchange. This would save AEWSD/MWD the energy and cost associated with otherwise pumping and returning groundwater. If AEWSD is also directly recharging water to their groundwater at the time of exchange, it would also save AEWSD the expenses associated with operating their recharge basins. This proposed exchange is intended to allow the expeditious water delivery of surface water supplies available to AEWSD in lieu of groundwater it otherwise would have extracted and delivered to MWD in fulfilling its return water obligations to MWD under their Program of water banking this year and potentially next year. Water so delivered would primarily serve to reduce energy use with attendant cost savings and would allow MWD greater instantaneous access to water supplies to meet summertime peaking demands as well as provide greater operational flexibility to AEWSD.

Reclamation's finding that implementation of the Proposed Action will result in no significant impact to the quality of the human environment is supported by the following findings:

Findings

Surface Water Resources

Under the Proposed Action AEWS D would have sufficient water supplies to meet their water demands. CVP supplies made available for delivery to MWD would be surplus to AEWS D's immediate operational needs. This could be due to unanticipated short term allocations such as the declaration of "uncontrolled season" where Class 2 Friant Division CVP water is available in large amounts for a limited amount of time to all Class 2 contractors. Declarations such as this can provide the water needed for the exchange or be used to meet AEWS D's immediate irrigation demand freeing up schedulable water supplies for exchange.

The exchange would occur entirely within existing AEWS D conveyance facilities. During uncontrolled season, AEWS D imports all the water their system is capable of transporting; consequently, the exchange would not allow AEWS D to make use of more CVP water than they have the capacity to divert and recharge, such as the CVP water available during an uncontrolled season.

Alternatively, if the water is exchanged outside of a uncontrolled season, AEWS D may have to pump out a like amount of groundwater that was moved to MWD as surface water; however, AEWS D would have the opportunity to choose the most economic power purchase periods. Also, by having some surface water to move at higher flow rates than available from pumping the well field AEWS D would have more flexibility to maximize the use of AEWS D's Intertie pumping plants and Aqueduct turnout when capacity is present.

MWD will receive the same amount of water through the same existing conveyance facilities as in the Program. There is no change with regard to the No Action for MWD. The Proposed Action has no affect on water supplies in MWD.

CVP and SWP facilities would not be impacted as the exchanged water must be scheduled and approved by Reclamation and DWR. As in the No Action Alternative, no natural streams or water courses would be affected since no additional pumping or diversion would occur. There would be no impact to water resources due to the Proposed Action.

Land Use

The Proposed Action would generate no new housing and would result in no new permanent population growth that would exceed official regional or local population projections in the AEWS D's or MWD's service area. No new agricultural development is expected under the Proposed Action.

Biological Resources

Most of the habitat types required by species protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA) do not occur in the project area. The Proposed Action would not involve the conversion of any land fallowed and untilled for three or more years. The Proposed Action also would not change the land use patterns of the cultivated or fallowed fields that do have some value to listed species or birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Since no natural stream courses or additional pumping would occur, there would be no effects on listed fish species. No critical habitat occurs within the area affected by the Proposed Action and so none of the primary constituent elements of any critical habitat would be affected.

Cultural Resources

The exchange of water between AEWS and MWD, as described in the Proposed Action, is the type of activity that has no potential to affect historic properties. There will be no new ground disturbance and the exchange will be accomplished using existing facilities. These lands are agricultural lands that have undergone cultivation and land disturbance for more than 20 years. Because the action will result in no potential to affect historic properties, there will be no impacts to cultural resources as a result of the implementation of the Proposed Action.

Indian Trust Assets

There are no tribes possessing legal property interests held in trust by the United States in the water involved with this action, nor is there such a property interest in the lands designated to receive the water proposed in this action.

There are no ITAs, Indian Reservations, or public domain allotments found within the water districts involved. The Proposed Action would not affect or interfere with the observation of religious or other ceremonies associated with ITAs.

Socioeconomic Resources

The proposed exchange primarily results in less energy use with virtually no changes in flow path. This would save AEWS/MWD the energy and cost associated with otherwise pumping and returning groundwater. If AEWS is also directly recharging water to their groundwater at this time on their own behalf, it would also save AEWS the expenses associated with operating their recharge basins. The proposed exchanges would not interfere with SWP or CVP priorities or operations and would result in temporarily increased water supply reliability.

Environmental Justice

The Proposed Action would not cause dislocation, changes in employment, or increase flood, drought, or disease. The Proposed Action would not disproportionately impact economically disadvantaged or minority populations. This proposed exchange is intended to allow the expeditious water delivery of surface water supplies available to AEWS in lieu of groundwater it otherwise would have extracted and delivered to MWD in fulfilling its return water obligations to MWD under their Program of water banking this year and potentially next year. Water so delivered would primarily serve to reduce energy use with attendant cost savings and would also allow MWD greater instantaneous access to water supplies to meet summertime peaking demands, therefore securing agricultural jobs in the region. The unemployment rate in the vicinity of AEWS and MWD suggests that any actions that maintain seasonal jobs should be considered beneficial. Disadvantaged populations would not be subject to disproportionate impacts.

Cumulative Impacts

AEWS is proposing to exchange and deliver some of their own CVP Friant water to MWD in lieu of AEWS pumping the previously delivered SWP water that is banked in the underground. As a consequence, the groundwater that otherwise would have been pumped would be exchanged in its ownership from being MWD's to AEWS's. This would save AEWS the energy and cost associated with otherwise pumping and returning groundwater. Since AEWS may also be directly recharging water to their groundwater at this time on their own behalf, it would also save AEWS the expenses associated with operating their recharge basins.

The proposed “bucket-for-bucket” exchange primarily results in less energy use with virtually no changes in flow path. Without this exchange, AEWS D would deliver MWD an equivalent amount of pumped groundwater from MWD’s banked supply within AEWS D.

The proposed exchange when added to other actions do not contribute to significant increases or decreases in environmental conditions. These water service actions are proposed to occur only within the timeframe specified for the consolidation for the CVP and SWP places of use, from approximately June 1, 2009 through May 31, 2010 and are not precedent setting. The Proposed Action was found to have no impact on water resources, biological resources, cultural resources, ITAs, and socioeconomics and therefore there is no contribution to cumulative impacts on these resources areas. Slight beneficial impacts to land use and environmental justice are within the historical variations and would not contribute to cumulative impacts. Overall there would be no cumulative impacts caused by the Proposed Action.